

In Memory of Jeanette Schoon
killed in exile by a letter-bomb

Your nervy laugh and small, neat hands, Jeanette,
the high, compassionate ideals which you,
like a swallow, tossed about in storm-clouds,
still flew towards, these lines commemorate -
a bunch of winter marigolds, bitter,
but still affirmative, gathered to mark
the grave-side reverie of a student friend.

But language, it close-knit fabric of words,
which speaks with ease of precious, humdrum things,
your kitchen's bright kettle, those hands cradling
that last blue mug of tea, language is ripped,
the threads dangling, by such a smashing
blast, can only gesture, patchily, at a
room in shambles, the rafters smoking, freak-
mangled chairs, the hair-tufts, flesh
-bits, your infant's ...

Not grief, Jeanette, some sort of remembrance
is all you'd ask, a woman of privilege
who spoke her mind, who never would accept,
in prison or out, how much we humans loathe
to be confronted with our cruelties.

This truth we both misjudged, when, as students,
our placards raised, we marched the Joburg streets,
your language then a tapestry of dreams
with numb horror, at human violence, torn through,
as mine, in memory of your high ideals,
your gentle hands and voice is now, Jeanette.